News Letter

OF THE

CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE & PSYCHOLOGY OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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MINOR LITANY

This being a time confused and with few clear stars,
Either private ones or public,
Out of its darkness I make a litany
For the lost, for the half-lost, for the desperate,
For all those who suffer, not in the flesh,
I will say their name, but not yet.

This is for those who talk to the bearded man in the quiet office,
Sensibly, calmly, explaining just how it was,
And suddenly burst into noisy, quacking tears;
For those who live through the party, wishing for death;
For those who take the sensible country walks,
Wondering if people stare;
For those who try to hook rugs in the big, bright room
And do it badly and are pleased with the praise;
For the night and the fear of the demons of the night;
For the lying back on the couch and the winding talk.

This is for those who work and those who may not,
For those who suddenly come to a locked door,
And the work falls out of their hands;
For those who step off the pavement into hell,
Having not observed the red light and the warning signals
Because they are busy or ignorant or proud.

This is for those who are bound in the paper chains
That are stronger than links of iron; this is for those who
Each day heave the papier-maché rock up the huge and burning hill,
And there is no rock, and no hill, but they do not know it.

This is for those who wait till six for the drink,
For eleven for the tablet;
And for those who cannot wait but go to the darkness;
And for those who long for the darkness but do not go,
Who walk to the window and see the body falling,
Hear the thud of air in the ears,
And then turn back to the room and sit down again,
None having observed the occurrence but themselves.

Christ have mercy upon us.
Freud have mercy upon us.
Life, have mercy upon us.

This is for those who painfully haul the dark fish out of the dark,
The child's old nightmare, embalmed in its own pain,
And, after that, get well or do not get well,
But do not forget the sulphur in the mouth or the time when the world
was different, not for awhile.

And for those, who also, the veterans of another kind of war,
Who say "no thanks" to the cocktails, who say "no thanks, well, yes,
give me a Coca-Cola", with the trained smile,
Those who hid the bottles so cleverly in the trunk,
Who bribed the attendant, who promised to be good,
Who woke in the dirty bed in the unknown town.
They are cured now, very much cured.
They are tanned and fine. Their eyes are their only scars.

This is for those with the light white scars on the wrists,
Who remember the smell of gas and the vomiting,
And it meant little, and it is a well known symptom
And they were always careful to phone, before.
Nevertheless, they remember.
This is for those who heard the music suddenly get too loud,
Who could not alter the fancy when it came.

Chloral, have mercy upon us.
Amytal, have mercy upon us.
Nembutal, have mercy upon us.

This occurs more or less than it did in past times.
There are statistics. There are no real statistics.
There is also no heroism. There is merely
Fatigue, pain, great confusion, sometimes recovery.

The name as you know, is Legion.
What' s your name friend? Where are you from, and how did you
get here?
The name is Legion. It's legion in the case history.
Friends, Romans, Countrymen,
Mr. and Mrs. Legion is the name.

---Stephen Vincent Benét*

It's much too long for an epigraph, of course, but we thought our members would like to see (or see again) a complete work rather than a fragment. Benét has, it seems to us, given us one of the most forcible examples of a synthesis between depth psychology and creative literature.

The remainder of this issue will be devoted, for the second time, to pre-convention material, consisting of our annual Tentative Agenda, our conference paper by Professor Wayne Burns (submitted to our readers in this form pursuant to MLA rules), an abstract of a paper originally delivered at the English Institute by Professor Carvel Collins (on which our members are specifically asked to comment either at the Conference or in writing), and an index to the running bibliographies which have appeared in this NEWS LETTER during the past two years.

Subscribers and former members of the Conference are once again urged to write promptly for reservations as soon as the official program of the MLA meeting is issued.

* From SELECTED WORKS OF STEPHEN VINCENT BENET, published by Rinehart and Company, Inc. Copyright 1940 by Stephen Vincent Benét.

TENTATIVE AGENDA
of the
THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY

To be held at the meeting of the Modern Language Association of America on Sunday, December 28th, 1952, from 2:00 P. M. to 3:30 P. M. in Room 404, Hotel Statler, Boston, Massachusetts.

1. Continuance of Organization

Question: Shall we continue the meetings of a group to discuss the interrelationships between literature and psychology, in the form of an annual Conference or, alternately, of a Discussion Group, if the latter is approved by the officers of MLA ?

2. Permanent Organization

If it is the wish of those present, the chairman will entertain a motion that a nominating committee be appointed from those in attendance, to present a ticket for chairman, secretary, and steering committee for 1953, for election by those in attendance at the close of the meeting.

3. Conference Paper

FREUDIANISM, CRITICISM, AND JANE EYRE
Presentation by Professor Wayne Burns, University of Washington, based on the mimeographed paper distributed before the Conference.

4. Discussion

Discussion from the floor based on Professor Burns's paper, contents of recent issues of the NEWS LETTER, and general topics, in the order given. Each speaker will be limited to four or five minutes in all. Members who cannot attend may submit brief statements which will be read or summarized by the Secretary.

5. Recommendations

Shall the NEWS LETTER be continued? Are there any suggestions as to its future form and contents? Shall there be a specific topic for the next annual meeting, if any?

6. The Election

Slates to be presented by the nominating committee, if No. 2, above, is approved, or by nominations from the floor.

7. Adjournment

Officers for the 1952 meeting:

Chairman: William J. Griffin
Secretary and Editor: Leonard F. Manheim
Steering Committee: Roy P. Basler
Wayne Burns
Eleanor L. Nicholes

Freudianism, Criticism and Jane Eyre

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by Wayne Burns

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> Any rational approach is valid to literature and may be properly called critical which fastens at any point upon the work itself. The utility of a given approach depends partly upon the strength of the mind making it and partly upon the recognition of the limits appropriate to it. Limits may be of scope, degree, or relevance, and may be either plainly laid out by the critic himself, or may be determined by his readers; and it is, by our argument, the latter case that commonly falls, since an active mind tends to overestimate the scope of its tools and to take as necessary those doctrinal considerations which habit has made seem instinctive... What produces the evil of stultification and the malice of controversy is the confused approach, when the limits are not seen... and the driving power becomes emotional. — R.P.Blackmur

These notes---and they are notes, rather than a finished paper---deal only with a single limited aspect of the relationships between literature and psychoanalysis. Within these limits my first aim is to offer a few suggestions as to what psychoanalysis can and cannot do, and to present these suggestions as provocatively as possible, in the hope of bringing some of our key differences to open discussion. My second aim, really an extension of the first, is to offer a tentative reading of a passage from Jane Eyre---to pose in concrete form a few of the questions that confront every practicing critic whose psychological awareness has been heightened by contact with Freudian psychoanalysis. In other words these notes are intended to supplement one section of Mr. William J. Griffin's excellent paper of last year: that section dealing with the uses and abuses of psychoanalysis in literary criticism.

How one understands the uses and abuses Mr. Griffin outlined will of course depend in large part on how one sees literature. To the organicist or the formalist, nearly all the uses will be abuses; to a certain type of sociological critic, on the other hand, nearly all the abuses will be uses. So it goes, and since each of these ways of looking at literature is defensible in terms of its own premises, there is little to be gained by direct argument. For those of us who see literature differently, who love and respect it, not merely as popularized philosophy or puristic form, but as the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge---including psychoanalytic knowledge---there would seem to be only one positive alternative. And that is for each of us to become in some measure an aesthetician---at least to the point where (following such a study as Stephen Pepper's The Basis of Criticism in the Arts) we can develop a theory of criticism commensurate with our understanding of life and art: a theory that recognizes literature "as such," yet at the same time recognizes the "as such" to be inclusive (rather than formalistically exclusive) up to the point defined by the artistic intention, as expressed in the artistic form; in other words, a theory that accommodates Freudian or any other kind of knowledge---in so far as that knowledge is demanded by the artistic intention of the work itself.

A number of theories meet these basic requirements; among others, those of Herbert Read, Kenneth Burke, David Daiches. My own critical thinking follows most closely that of Herbert Read, whose Surrealism and the Romantic Principle I consider the best single guide through the maze of critical "isms." But this is a personal preference that I do not wish to insist upon here.

Our need is for basic theoretical guidance, and despite individual variation, any one of the critics I have mentioned (or for that matter, any one of a dozen other contextualist critics who could be mentioned) will provide that guidance: they will show us how our psychological awareness can be brought under aesthetic control, and used to quicken (not deaden) our critical faculties.

I place so much stress on theoretical guidance because, without it, there is no way of controlling our Freudianism---except in so far as we exercise empiric restraint. And for most of us, the critical record indicates, empiric restraint is not enough. Of all the criticism that is in any sense Freudian, by far the best is that which has placed Freudian knowledge under the strictest kind of aesthetic control; by far the worst, that which has substituted Freudian for critical theory. By looking to psychoanalysis for the critical guidance it cannot give, that it does not pretend to give, this latter type of critical Freudianism has denied the uniqueness of literary expression, has, in fact, treated literature as if it were another territory to be conquered in the name of St. Sigmund---thus violating both Freud and literature, and in the process, reducing good literature to poor Freudianism.

In making this point, however, I do not mean to suggest that any Freudian has tried to work out his aggressions on literature. The errors have been errors of theoretical understanding, which, in critical practice, have led to all kinds of reductive fallacies---even to that of mistaking literature for life. Hamlet, for instance, is a character in a play, and must therefore be placed in the category <u>homo fictus</u> (as distinct from the category <u>homo sapiens</u>): yet certain critics (and movie-makers), unable to control the new insight psychoanalysis has given them, have violated this distinction---in a few instances so grossly that they have reduced an infinitely complex drama to the level of Oedipal melodrama.* More sophisticated critics have also erred (again, I believe, for want of theoretical understanding) in their attempts at Freudian criticism---mainly in their tendency to look upon literature as an extension of the author's life. Approached in this way---as a receptacle for odd bits of biographical information---the work of literature loses its form, and with its form its meaning: it becomes, not a full expression of the writer's genius, but a fictionalized biography, an expression of his day-by-day actions and thoughts, brought into focus and interpreted through psychoanalysis. In short, this approach substitutes the man for his work, and then reduces the man (along with his work) to a case history.

Of course these reductive fallacies are not peculiar to psychoanalysis, or so-called psychoanalytic criticism. Other and more widely accepted schools of criticism are equally guilty, e. g. those that emphasize myth, morality, ideas, metaphysics, form, etc.---if literature is not psychoanalysis, neither is it myth, morality, ideas, metaphysics, or pure form. But the prevalence of reductive criticism in no sense justifies it. If we are to do full critical justice to literature---and incidentally allay the suspicions of those who look upon us as translators masquerading as critics---our first task is to rid ourselves of the reductive taint.

Once we have done this, the next problem---again returning to our theory of criticism---is to define the aesthetic potential of psychoanalysis. My own definition of this potential, implicit in what I have already said, is based on the premise that literature cannot be subjugated to any system of thought, not even to the Freudian system. I therefore see little value, and much possible danger, in equating, say, a character's actions, with the Freudian interpretation

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*As most of us will recall, Mr. Griffin's paper includes a perceptive critique of our Shakespearian criticism.

of those actions, or a writer's symbols with the Freudian interpretation of those symbols. While it may be at times legitimate and helpful to make direct use of certain Freudian concepts (e.g. the super-ego), the critic must use the concepts, and not be used by them; more than that, his usage must be defined, and guided, and finally controlled, by sound critical principles based on a sound critical theory. Otherwise he will fall into still other variations of the reductive fallacy. So far as I can see, then, a systematic knowledge of psychoanalysis is of slight value to the critic.

This point, I realize, may provoke serious objection, particularly as it relates to contemporary writing. Why, it may be asked, is systematic Freudian theory of little direct critical value when so much recent literature is consciously Freudian? The answer, I believe, hinges on the fact that the conscious Freudianism of modern writers differs little from the pre-Freudian insights of earlier writers---except that the modern is plainer, and therefore more easily recognized and dealt with. I am, of course, speaking of serious, not popular literature. On the popular level, as in a best-selling novel I read a few years ago entitled The Story of Mrs. Murphy, one often finds drugstore Freudianism tricked out in fictional disguise. But such writing is not art, cannot be art, no matter how skillfully it is presented. Why this is true, I have tried to explain in another essay ("The Novelist as Revolutionary," Arizona Quarterly, Spring, 1951) in which I have argued, and I think proved, that the writer as artist cannot work within the limits of the Freudian or any other system of thought, and still produce art. He cannot, because his ultimate function is to express his own particular "difference," his own genius, his own vision of reality; and to do this he must push through and beyond the existing frontiers of knowledge---including psychoanalytic knowledge. To the artist all systems of thought are either means or impediments---to be rejected or revolutionized to serve his own ends: and that, in keeping with the demands of the creative process, is how serious modern writers have used psychoanalysis. Like Angus Wilson, whose Hemlock and After derives in part from psychoanalysis, they have discovered in Freud, not final patterns to be fictionally upholstered, but a means of further probing the mystery of human experience. By so using Freud, by moving from, not towards, Freudian system, they have deepened and strengthened their grasp of reality, and, less obviously, their art. As yet, however, their expressed psychological insights are nor markedly different from, or superior to, those of their greatest predecessors, the writers who first revealed the springs of human action that Freud later rediscovered and systematized. Though working from a higher threshold of psychological awareness than earlier writers, the serious modern writer is still, of necessity, following the same old revolutionary path---away from all system, towards difference. Consequently, his writings, like the writing of the past, is an individualized expression of his own vision of reality that cuts through and beyond systematic Freudianism---ultimately to create its own ordering of experience. For this reason, the Freudian system, in and of itself, can provide little more than points of critical departure, cirresponding to the points of creative departure. Taken beyond those base points, it is awkward and dangerous---even as a supplementary critical tool.

But systematic knowledge is one thing, awareness another. If the literature of the past and present is not systematically Freudian, it is invariably psychological, often in a sense that can be fully apprehended only through awareness deriving from (but not to be confused with) systematic Freudian theory. And it is here, I believe, that we can begin to see the prime critical function of psychoanalysis: which is to raise critical sensitivity to the nth imaginative power. On the critic as on the creative writer, Freud confers new powers of vision; and just as the serious modern writer uses those powers to probe further into the mystery of human experience, so the serious critic, whose first business is to follow the writer as artist wherever he leads, uses the stimulation afforded by Freud to realize (i.e. recreate) what the artist has created.

By so defining the critical function of Freudianism, I am, I admit, retreating from the critical position which many of us have tried to maintain. Yet there seems to be no alternative; for those positions, I am convinced, are aesthetically untenable, even by the most liberal Contextualistic standards. Unless I am mistaken, we really have no choice but to give up what has come to be known as psychoanalytic criticism in favor of a theory of criticism that includes but is not dominated by Freudian awareness; in other words, a Contextualist theory that places Freudian awareness under the aesthetic controls provided by the individual work of art.

For those who are willing to accept this theory, as theory---and I expect considerable argument---there still remains the question of practical implications. Where, may it be asked, does this theory leave those of us who are practicing critics? Does it not, with all its restrictions, just about eliminate Freudianism from the critical picture? In answer, I should say that the restrictions eliminate not Freudianism, but Freudian abuses; that despite those restrictions, the theory opens up more critical possibilities than reductive Freudianism---though, in the process, it necessarily deprives us of our special privileges. Once we begin using Freudianism as a stimulant rather than as a substitute for critical imagination, we shall be responsible to the same criteria as all other critics, and therefore, in a sense, more on our own. We will no longer be able to rely on the master, or upon the special knowledge we have derived from him. If we make a point, we will have to support it on the basis of textual and not Freudian evidence---and that, in the beginning, may be difficult, for it means, among other things, that we shall have to cease being Freudians---at least during the time we are engaged with a work of literature---and submit our whole beings to the work itself.

More specifically, it means that we shall have to de-systematize our minds---actually make an effort to clear our minds of the systematic Freudian knowledge we may have spent years in developing. Otherwise we shall inevitably translate rather than follow what the author as artist has written---the way a friend of mine, reading Hemingway's latest novel, the one about the big fish and the little man, translated the cramps in the little man's hand, the massaging of the fingers, etc. We simply cannot read a piece of literature in this way---as if it were merely a whetstone for our own ingenuity. If we do, we shall be writing our own poems and novels, not reading those that have been written for us. I repeat: we must try to forget our systematic Freudian knowledge. We must, because it is only by forgetting Freud's ordering of experience---so intense and powerful that it tends to overwhelm the orderings of art---that we can achieve the heightened yet unsystematized awareness art demands, preparatory to imposing its own system, its own order, upon our minds and imaginations.

All this will be difficult, yet it will, I believe, enable us to make the fullest use of our Freudian awareness without being overwhelmed by it. We will be free to exploit and control its stimulative powers, to place these powers under the direction of the artist, to do with what he will. Indeed if we can develop our new-found powers to their ultimate potential, we should be able to follow wherever the artist leads, and thus realize artistic heights and depths that were, until Freud, closed to all but the greatest and most percipient minds, that are still closed to system-bound (including Freud-bound) critics of all schools. Of course we must have a fairly active and well balanced imagination to begin with, or Freudianism, as W. H. Auden has suggested (The New Republic, October 6, 1952), will stimulate us into critical foolishness, or worse. But if we possess this necessary imaginative equipment---and nearly all of us do, I believe---we can, with the help of Freudian stimulation, develop an aesthetic awareness that will, in certain instances, carry us beyond the criticism of even the most perceptive non-Freudian critics---beyond, for example, T. S. Eliot's criticism of Hamlet, in which he mistakes Shakespeare's psychological subtlety for

inferior artistry; then, on the basis of this misapprehension, pronounces Gertrude inadequate, the play a failure.

If we can go beyond Eliot in certain instances, we can go beyond other critics in still other instances. And this, I believe, is our critical task: to correct, or supplement, or if necessary, replace the work of pre- or non-Freudian critics with our own reinterpretations and revaluations. Such critics as Edmund Wilson, Herbert Read, and, on a less exalted scale, certain members of our own group, have already pointed the way. It is up to the rest of us to follow, and we can best do this, I believe, by adopting some such critical approach as the one I have suggested, i. e. by working, not as Freudians, but as critics utilizing the awareness we have derived from Freud.

To illustrate this approach at all adequately I should now present a full criticism of Jane Eyre. But I have spoken at such length about theoretical problems that I shall have to limit my analysis to a single passage, with emphasis on a few aspects of this passage. At the risk of seeming to violate my own dicta I shall therefore evade basic critical problems and turn directly to the passage in question, quoting it at length, in the hope that I can, by arranging and underscoring parts of the text, bring out the implications that seem to me crucial. The passage, which is a key one, leading into the very center of the novel, opens with St. John once again pressing Jane to marry him, this time for the greater glory of God:

He laid his hand on my head as he uttered the last words.

> He had spoken earnestly, mildly, his look was not, indeed, that of a lover beholding his mistress; but it was that of pastor recalling his wandering sheep - or better, of a guardian angel watching the soul for which he is responsible.

All men of talent, whether they be men of feeling or not; whether they be zealots, or aspirants, or despots - provided only they be sincere - have their sublime moments: when they subdue and rule. I felt veneration for St. John - veneration so strong that its impetus thrust me at once to the point I had so long shunned. I was tempted to cease struggling with him - to rush down the torrent of his will into the gulf of his existence, and there lose my own. I was almost as hard beset by him now as I had been once before, in a different way, by another.

> I was a fool both times. To have yielded then would have been an error of principle; to have yielded now would have been an error of judgement. So I think at this hour, when I look back to the crisis through the quiet medium of time: I was unconscious of folly at the instant.

I stood motionless under my hierophant's touch. My refusals were forgotten - my fears overcome - my wrestlings paralysed. The Impossible - i. e. my marriage with St. John - was fast becoming the Possible. All was changing utterly, with a sudden swoop. Religion called - Angels beckoned - God commanded -

life rolled together like a scroll - death's gates opening, showed eternity beyond: it seemed, that for safety and bliss there, all here might be sacrificed in a second. The dim room was full of visions.

"Could you decide now?" asked the missionary. The inquiry was put in gentle tones: he drew me to him gently. Oh, that gentleness! how far more potent is it than force! I could resist St. John's wrath: I grow pliant as a reed under his kindness.

> Yet I knew all the time, if I yielded now, I should not the less be made to repent, some day, of my former rebellion. His nature was not changed by one hour of solemn prayer: it was only elevated.
>
> "I could decide if I were but certain," I answered: "were I but convinced that it is God's will I should marry you, I could vow to marry you here and now - come afterwards what would!"

"My prayers are heard!" ejaculated St. John. He pressed his hand firmer on my head, as if he claimed me: he surrounded me with his arm, almost as if he loved me

> (I say almost - I know the difference - for I had felt what it was to be loved; but, like him, I had now put love out of the question, and thought only of duty): I contended with my inward dimness of vision, before which clouds yet rolled. I sincerely, deeply, fervently longed to do what was right; and only that. "Show me, show me the path." I entreated of Heaven.

I was excited more than I had ever been;

> and whether what followed was the effect of excitement, the reader shall judge.
>
> All the house was still; for I believe all, except St. John and myself, were now retired to rest. The one candle was dying out:

the room was full of moonlight. My heart beat fast and thick: I heard its throb. Suddenly it stood still to an inexpressible feeling that thrilled it through, and passed at once to my head and extremities. The feeling was not like an electric shock; but it was quite as sharp, as strange, as startling: it acted on my senses as if their utmost activity hitherto had been but torpor: from which they were now summoned, and forced to wake. They rose expectant: eye and ear waited, while the flesh quivered on my bones:

"What have you heard? What do you see?" asked St. John.
I saw nothing: but I heard a voice somewhere cry -
"Jane! Jane! Jane!" nothing more.
"Oh God! what is it?" I gasped.
I might have said, "Where is it?" for it did not seem in the room - nor in the house - nor in the garden: it did not come out of the air - nor from under the earth - nor from overhead. I had heard it - where, or whence, for ever impossible to know. And it was the voice of a human being - a known, loved, well-remembered voice - that of Edward Fairfax Rochester: and it spoke in pain and woe wildly, eerily, urgently.

"I am coming!" I cried. "Wait for me! Oh, I will come!"

I flew to the door, and looked out into the passage: it was dark. I ran out into the garden: it was void.
"Where are you?" I exclaimed.
The Hills beyond Marsh Glen sent the answer faintly back - "Where are you?" I listened. The wind sighed low in the firs: all was moorland loneliness and midnight hush.
"Down superstition." I commented, as that spectre rose up by the black yew at the gate. "This is not thy deception, not they witchcraft: it is the work of nature. She was roused, and did - no miracle - but her best."

. . . . .

I filled the interval in walking softly about my room, and pondering the visitation which had given my plans their present bent. I recalled that inward sensation I had experienced: for I could recall it, with all its unspeakable strangeness. I recalled the voice I had heard; again I questioned whence it came, as vainly as before: it seemed in me - not in the external world. I asked, was it a mere nervous impression - a delusion? I could not conceive or believe: it was more like an inspiration. The wondrous shock of feeling had come like the earthquake which shook the foundations of Paul and Silas's prison; it had opened the doors of the soul's cell, and loosed its bands... *

The rationale of my divisions and underlinings should be fairly obvious. I have, for the most part, double-spaced the more properly dramatic lines, single-spaced the commentary; furthermore, I have underlined those phrases and lines that express the sexual implications of the scene most directly, doubling the underlining for words that have definite sexual connotations. Following these markings---which but call attention to what is textually there---it becomes clear that, on the dramatic level, Jane is experiencing a form of orgasm, induced by St. John's touch, etc., and enactioned by his seeming religiosity. In the circumstances she gives in to what she had denied herself with Rochester: her body takes over, so to speak, and at the height of her physical ecstasy she hears Rochester's voice---to which she responds with "I am coming."

If this reading is correct (and I shall attempt to justify it later on), Jane Eyre's psychological transference anticipates the mechanism of Proust's "intermittences of the heart"---and making due allowance for the fact that Bronte's presentation is of course less analytical, more direct and lyrical and in a sense melodramatic. She was, after all, writing within the crude conventions of Victorian romance; moreover, she was writing as a Methodistical naif, with a disregard amounting to scorn for all niceties of technique.

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* Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre (Modern Library Edition) pp. 456-459.

Jane Austen or Jane Austen's type of fictional art she could never abide: and she said so, in a scathing denunctiation of Emma that may stand as a defense of her own art:

> She [Jane Austen] does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of the genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her... Even to the feelings she vouchsafes nothing more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition... Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life and the sentient target of death - this Miss Auston ignores.*

What she thought Jane Auston ignores——"what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seat of life..." this is what Charlotte Bronte sought to express, by the means and in the manner I have suggested. Her technique——in contrast to Auston's——were designed to cut beneath surface-reality; to express unseen, passionate depths; and they were designed to achieve this expression (again in contrast to Auston) by means of a heart-to-heart intimacy that eliminates psychic distance, taht achieves in art what her heroine sought in her personal relations: "I could never rest in communication with strong, discreet, and refined minds, whether male or female, till I had passed the outworks of conventional reserve, and crossed the threshold of confidence, and won a place by their heart's very hearthstone."

These were Charlotte Bronte's artistic aims and techniques, through which, in Jane Eyre, she endeavored to objectify her own sufferings, her own need for love. And, for reasons which can only be touched on here, she succeeded——though in a way and to a degree that she herself fif not fully realize. Less aware of the Victorian proprieties than of the demands of her own feelings, she poured those feelings into her seemingly inadequate conceptual techniques, and with so much verbal force that she transformed her spiritual melodrama into a passionate quest for love and human fulfillment. Of course she retained the outward trappings of melodrama, as well as her Methodist morality and phraseology. These were the only words and forms of expression she knew. But at her best, as in the passage I have just quoted, she gave her words an emphasis all her own—— a personal accent that expresses, not what a Victorian Methodistical lady was supposed to feel, according to the prescribed moral-religious doctrines of the time, but what Charlotte Bronte felt she did feel. And it is these feelings, expressed in her differentiated language, which underlie the melodramatic surface of the novel, and give it a poetic depth that few critics have recognized—— the one notable exception being Virginia Woolf, whose brief impressionistic criticism of Jane Eyre (in The Common Reader) brings out the prime quality of Charlotte Bronte's art: "It is the red and fitful glow of the heart's fire which illumines her page——we read Charlotte Bronte not for exquisite observation of character——her characters are vigorous and elementary; not for comedy——hers is grim and crude; not for a philosophic view of life——hers is that of a country parson's daughter, but for her poetry." Although I am tempted to quote at greater length——Virginia Woolf says it all so beautifully——her main point is the one I have already stressed, viz. that Bronte's poetry, by expressing our more inarticulate passions, carries on the emotion and illumines the meaning of the novel.

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*Letter of 12 April 1850 to W. S. Williams. Quoted by Mary Lascelles, Jane Austen and Her Art, pp. 118-119.

I have stated Bronte's artistic aims, techniques, and achievements at such length because it is only by placing the passage I have quoted in relation to the novel as a whole that we can determine whether or not Bronte's language says what I have said it does, whether or not the passage is poetry or something else, whether, in its structural aspects, it violates or fulfills Bronte's artistic intention. Time permitting, I would now be obliged to substantiate my reading by means of close textual analysis, then to show---again through textual analysis---that my reading is not only correct, but aesthetically relevant. For it is always possible that such a reading, though sound in itself, represents an isolated slip of the pen, corresponding to a Freudian slip of the tongue---in which case the sexual meanings would have slight aesthetic significance, would, in fact, amount to little more than an aesthetic excrescence---a flaw in the texture, leading to a weakness in the structure of the novel.

In the present instance, however, these are but hypothetical possibilities. Unless I have totally misread the textual evidence, the sexuality of this passage, far from being an excrescence, is of a piece with the sexuality, or if one wishes, the passionate physicality, that permeates every aspect of the novel---from Jane's experiences in the red room to the final scene in which she dallies with the physical hulk of her shorn Samson. To mistake Jane's physicality for conventional Methodism or Gothicism, the way G. Elsie Harrison and so many other critics have done, is therefore to miss the essence of Bronte's poetry, and with it the qualities that save the novel from banality. It is to see Rochester, for instance, as merely another version of the transpontine hero, rather than as Jane's id-derived dream-man, the physical treasure at the end of her sexual rainbow. And what is true for Rochester is true for the other characters, the plot, in fact the entire novel: without the poetry it is exactly what Bret Harte's devastating parody reveals it to be.* It is "the red and fitful glow of the heart's fire" that makes the difference, that gives the melodramatic surface a surreal dimension, and lights up the dark abysses of the Victorian conscience.

For Jane life was, in Bronte's own words, a conflict between "principles and propensities"---a conflict that was only resolved when Rochester's voice came to her through the Victorian night. From this point onwards the novel moves in a straight line to its inevitable conclusion. The passage under consideration is therefore structurally as well as thematically pivotal: it marks the climax, the turning-point, of the dramatic action. So much is generally agreed upon, even by those critics who maintain that the dramatic structure of the novel will not permit the resolution that follows from Jane's climactic experience. "Up to this point," according to Edwin Muir, "the story has been worked out dramatically; afterwards it is arranged by the author. In the plot of a dramatic novel a falsehood like this is a fundamental one, affecting the whole---action, characters, everything."* If Muir were correct, Bronte's resolution, like the moralistic resolutions of so many Victorian novels, would have to be separated from the rest of the novel and regarded as a structural appendage. Otherwise we would have the tail wagging the dog---or, to vary the metaphor, the bustle defining the derriere.

There would be no need to mention this problem, were it not that Muir's criticism has some basis in structural fact. If one compares the dramatic structure of Jane Eyre with that, say, of Emma, Bronte's concluding chapters will look very much like a fictional bustle, and a rather conventional one at that. But in structure, as in texture, the outward characteristics of the novel are deceptive. It is not a "dramatic novel" in the sense Muir implies, nor is its resolution contrived or false. It derives its structural from its thematic unity, as expressed in its poetic substructure. And that substructure, as it

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* Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel, pp. 50-51.

manifests itself in the physicality of Jane's climactic experience, reveals that the concluding chapters are not appended but structurally integral. When Jane was trying to tear herself away from Rochester, after she had learned about his mad wife, a heavenly voice came to her (in a dream that recalled her childhood experience in the red room): "It spoke to my spirit: immeasurably distant was the tone, yet so near, it whispered in my heart - 'My daughter, flee temptation!'" Much against her propensities, in order to satisfy her principles, and the voice, she obeyed---to suffer the tyranny of St. John, until another voice came to her, "the voice of a human being...that of Edward Fairfax Rochester... it seemed in me... the work of nature. She [nature] was roused, and did - no miracle - but her best... the wondrous shock of feeling had come like an earthquake which shook the foundation of Paul and Silas's prison; it...opened the doors of the soul's cell, and loosed its bands..." In plainer words, Jane's experience set her free: it showed her that God's way was not the way of doctrine but the way of love---the way that led back to Mr. Rochester.

The poetry of Jane's passion thus extends and modulates the Gothic framework of the novel, finally bringing its strange events and coincidences into meaningful harmony. As Jane herself observes: "Circumstances knit themselves, fitted themselves, shot into order: the chain that had been lying hitherto a formless lump of links was drawn out straight..." Although Jane was speaking of only one sequence of events, her remarks apply to the structural pattern of the novel as a whole. From the first raw twilight of Gateshead to the last mile of Jane's walk through Ferndean Wood, the poetry controls the dramatic action, giving it a movement (and within the movement a rhythm) that defines and illumines the passionate intensity of Jane's thematic quest---as she seeks to reconcile the ways of God to woman, as she gropes her way through the psychic darkness of Methodism to discover her love-ideal in a blinded, crippled Rochester.

Although my analysis of this one passage (in relation to the novel as a whole) is far from complete, and for the most part unsupported, it should indicate that my interpretation, if extended and developed, would alter the quality as well as the meaning of Jane Eyre. Just the few implications I have noted are sufficient, I think, to indicate how seriously the novel has been misunderstood and maligned. It is not a truncated "dramatic novel;" neither is it a "roaring melodrama," or a Methodist romance. Brought to "full artistic performance," it is a different and greater novel than any of these interpretations suggest. How different, how much greater, I plan to show in a separate essay that will continue from where I have left off here---an essay that should be a contribution to fictional criticism. Whether it will be that, or something considerably less or worse, will depend in large measure, I believe, on my ability to use and control my Freudian awareness in the ways I have tried to suggest in this paper.

University of Washington
Seattle 5, Washington

Editor's Note: Professor Carvel Collins's paper did not arrive in time to be included in the present issue of the NEWS LETTER. It will be presented for comment and criticism in our next issue.

A Communication——and a Correction from Dr. Ford

[On page 1 of the last issue Dr. William J. Ford, who contributed A NOTE ON HANS CASTORP, was referred to as "an active practicing psychiatrist." Dr. Ford wrote on October 9 as follows.]

For the News Letter readers: I am not and have never been a psychiatrist but I am a qualified "INTERNIST," that is a specialist in medicine as opposed to surgery, and a member of the American College of Physicians as well as more regional societies for specialists who are variously called "heart men," "diagnosticians."

In recent years it has been felt that Internists should know more about psychiatry, and from this knowledge of organic medicine and psychiatric medicine it has been hoped that a new understanding of human nature, sick and well, would arise. This is, of course called Psychosomatic Medicine.

Additions to and Changes in Subscription List

Joseph Prescott, Dept. of English, Wayne University, Detroit 1, Michigan

Professor H. K. Russell wishes to be addressed at 712 Greenwood Road, Chapel Hill, N. C.

This News Letter is now sent on an exchange basis to Seventeenth-Century News, J. Max Patrick, Editor, Queens College, Flushing 67, N. Y. (Annual subscription - $1.00) and to The Shakespeare Newsletter, Louis Marder, Editor, 749 Franklin D. Roosevelt Drive, New York 9, N. Y. (Annual subscription - $1.00)

The NEWS LETTER ends its year with forty-six paid subscribers. Last year the number was forty-two. Efficient continuation of the project at the present subscription rate would seem to require a list of about 100.

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Our very meagre space permits us to do no more than (1) list, by name, the authors whose works have been mentioned in the running bibliographies which have appeared in the 1951 and 1952 issues, and (2) list standard authors whose works have been the subject of specific comment in books and articles referred to in the bibliographies and elsewhere in the various issues. References are to volume, number and page in the NEWS LETTERS for 1951 and 1952.

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Last-Minute Items

A Conference on "The Modern Writer and Natural Science" has been scheduled at Boston for Saturday evening, December 27th, from 9:00 to 10:30 P. M., under the chairmanship of Professor Norbert Fuerst of the Department of German, Indiana University. Your Editor has been asked to "formulate in a statement of c. 5 minutes" a "topic, somehow related to the above theme." Attendance at this Conference would be of great aid in bringing together our special synthesis of literature and science with the more general study of interrelationships between the two great areas of learning.

The New York Psychoanalytic Institute has established a School of Applied Psychoanalysis, designed for students "who have had graduate training in the social sciences and the humanities or who have shown ability in these fields." Of particular interest to our members (in addition to the indispensable basic courses in theory) would be the study of fiction through the novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (beginning in March), of poetry through the works of A. E. Housman (beginning in February), and the symposium on "Analytic Contributions to the Understanding of Art and Literature," a course which is now under way. Your Editor has a number of copies of the School's prospectus. Additional information may be obtained from the Society's office at 247 East 82nd Street, New York 28. (We should be glad to hear of similar offerings in other parts of the country.)